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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experience of collegiate mid-level managers in the higher education organization through an examination of the construction of roles and the congruity of the constructed role to the environment. Using a qualitative, case study method and symbolic interactionism for a theoretical framework, the study examined the organizational world of two collegiate mid-level managers in student affairs at a major eastern research university. Data collection techniques included three interviews, three extended observations, a document review and interviews with subordinate staff. Analysis of the data found: (1) that the institutional climate is in the throes of transition as it grapples with difficult economic times; (2) that Student Affairs is much like those at other universities; (3) that one subject viewed the economic stress as an opportunity to make changes within his department while the other viewed the situation as personally and professionally demoralizing; (4) that the first subject's personality was that of community-builder and entrepreneur; (5) that the second subject's personality was that of protector; (6) that three factors may influence the extent to which role-culture congruity may be achieved: time, space, and 'ghosts' (those who have influenced the behavioral expectation of other actors in the culture). Includes 20 references.
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**Construction of Role and the Shaping of Organizational Culture:
A Symbolic Interactionist Study of Collegiate Mid-Level Managers
in Student Affairs**

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ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Construction of Role and the Shaping of Organizational Culture:
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in Student Affairs**

Introduction to the Study

The conventional portrait of collegiate mid-level managers is of administrators not intimately involved in shaping the collegiate environment (Scott, 1978). Conventional wisdom also indicates that collegiate mid-level managers are hired for their technical expertise (Scott, 1978, 1979), that this expertise is critical to higher education, and that it will continue to be critical (Austin & Gamson, 1983; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Birnbaum, 1988). From a structural-functionalist perspective, this portrait of the collegiate mid-level manager as a technical expert on the periphery of an environment presupposes the existence of an a priori culture into which mid-level managers participate and have prescribed roles and rules of conduct. From an interpretive perspective the portrait is painted differently. The interpretive portrait contains a landscape of objects that have meaning and expectations of behavior. This more complex portrait suggests that the behavioral expectations that collegiate mid-level managers have for themselves and those that other participants within the organization have for the mid-level manager are mutually interpreted framed around shared meanings regarding objects. Roles, in this instance, are not prescribed rules of conduct, but constructed and negotiated expectations of potential behaviors. This view suggests that culture is not an

a priori concept but, rather, an environment that is created, modified, and sustained by those who participate in that culture. Mid-level managers are not passive, but active players in creating their roles and in constructing and sustaining the cultural landscape or environment. Thus, contrary to Scott's notion, from the interpretive perspective, collegiate mid-level managers are intimately involved in shaping the collegiate environment.

Even though mid-level managers are considered critical to higher education, our knowledge about them remains limited as the population is a relatively understudied one (Austin, 1984; Austin & Gamson, 1983; Sagaria, 1986). This study is intended to contribute to our understanding about collegiate mid-level managers and to do so from the mid-level manager's point of view through an exploration of organizational role and cultural congruence. In some studies, this exploration could be labeled as one of socialization or organizational fit. Role-culture congruity is selected in this instance to reflect the interactive nature of the process as one in which negotiation among all actors takes place.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of the collegiate mid-level manager in the organization through an examination of the construction of roles and the congruity of the constructed role to the cultural environment. The mid-level managers selected hold dean/director positions in student affairs and meet the conventional definition set forth by Scott (1978):

mid-level collegiate administrators [are]...the deans and directors of support services to whom their assistants and first-line, most often nonexempt, supervisors report, and who themselves report to or are an officer at the vice-presidential level. (p. 3)

Theoretically framed in symbolic interactionism, this study uses a case study approach to examine the experiences of two mid-level managers and uses qualitative methods to explore this role-culture congruity. Two concepts crucial to this study are role and culture. In this study these concepts hold particular meaning.

Role is explored from the perspective of the mid-level manager and is viewed as a process whereby behavioral expectations of the mid-level manager are formulated through previous experiences and in interaction with others. This study also moves symbolic interactionism toward a consideration of culture, a concept of renewed interest as proponents of the framework struggle with the notion of structure in ways that leave the idealist view uncompromised. Culture is understood in this study as an environment of shared meaning regarding objects and, thus, behavioral expectations. The behavioral expectations of the mid-level manager are explored from the point of view of those in the environment. Finally, the extent to which the expectations of the mid-level managers and those of others in the environment are congruent or not is explored through a comparison of these behavioral expectations. Specific questions explored in this study are:

1. What roles do collegiate mid-level managers construct

and how are they constructed? What metaphors capture the role as perceived by the mid-level managers?

2. What role expectations do others have of the collegiate mid-level managers? What metaphors capture the role of the mid-level manager as perceived by other actors in the culture?
3. In what ways are the roles and cultural expectations congruent or not? Are the metaphors different? If so, what might account for these differences?
4. What are the implications of this study for higher education research?

Domain of the Study

This study draws upon research that treats universities as workplaces (Austin & Gamson, 1983) and universities as cultures (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Chaffee & Tierney, 1988; Tierney, 1988). The study differs from other studies conducted on collegiate mid-level managers both in content and approach. The majority of research on collegiate mid-level managers has focused upon specific areas such as career patterns and mobility (Scott, 1978; Miner & Estler, 1985) and organizational commitment and/or job satisfaction (Thomas, 1978; Austin, 1984) and not on the relationship between the mid-level manager and the organization, nor on how mid-level managers participate in shaping that relationship.

Recent literature exploring this relationship with student affairs personnel has been mostly limited to surveys (Reger & Hyman, 1988) or historical retrospectives (Penny, 1969; Smith, 1988; Brown, 1988), and reflective of a structural-functional perspective that presumes that individual behavior is shaped by

the organization. This study takes an alternative view, presuming that the individual participates in shaping the organization and focuses on this mutually shaping process through the exploration of role construction and organizational culture. Recent student affairs literature which calls for a reexamination of organizational barriers between student affairs and academic affairs (Creeden, 1988) and the reexamination of the need for uniform standards of professionalization (Whitt, et. al, 1990) provide support for taking this alternative view.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism assumes that: 1) human beings act on the basis of the meanings that objects have for them, 2) meaning is derived through interaction and, 3) the use of meanings by a person in his/her action involves an interpretive, not reactive process (Blumer, 1986). The first assumption strips reality of its structural, a priori nature as a composite culture that is singly 'out there' and toward which human beings react. Reality is reframed as something that is less certain, more emergent, more reflexive in nature. It denies a single reality in favor of multiple realities. The second assumption places the construction of reality in a social context. Meanings are assigned to objects through interaction with others. It is interaction that provides individuals with the opportunity to float trial balloons and to modify their own

beliefs, attitudes and understandings toward and about objects based upon their interpretation of others' reactions to the same. It is through the interpretive process, the third assumption, that shared meanings emerge and are maintained.

Central to symbolic interactionism is the concept of role. To interactionists roles are not constructs into which individuals adapt behavior rather, roles represent sets of expectations that individuals have about what they should or should not do in particular situations, in particular social contexts (Heiss, 1979). This perspective on role moves us away from constituting role as identifiable and distinct, and toward considering role as "a sort of ideal conception which constrains people to render any action situation into more or less explicit collections of interacting roles" (Turner, 1962, p. 21). From an interactionist's point of view, people act in social situations as if roles really did exist. Behaviors are enabled or constrained by the self's perception of what is expected in a particular situation. Further, this perception is constantly modified through the interaction process, whereby individuals act out their understandings of their roles and are then responded to by others in the social situation. This responding, in turn, provides information to the individual and is used to affirm one's expectations of self in the situation or used to modify those expectations.

Symbolic interactionists do subscribe to the notion of structure, but it is a different kind of structure than is

associated with structural-functionalism. Symbolic interactionism assumes that what emerges through the shared meanings that individuals, interacting in groups, attribute to objects is a social order. This social order, which Blumer (1986) refers to as the obdurate social world, does not exist a priori, but it is nonetheless stubbornly resistant to change. Hewitt (1990) refers to this social world of objects as culture. Culture, in Hewitt's view, is an environmental landscape composed of tangible and intangible objects, that is sustained by the shared ways in which people act toward those objects. While at once culture is external to the individual, it is shaped by the individual through his or her interaction with others and ultimate responses toward objects. Critical to understanding Hewitt's concept of culture is understanding role as a pattern of expected behaviors.

Approach to the Study, Method, and Site

The approach used in this study was the case study. The case study approach, with its combination of interview, observation, and document review, allows for the thick description referred to by Geertz (1973) as so vital to interpretive research.

The method selected for this study was a qualitative one. The assumptions inherent in qualitative research are consistent with those of the context and theoretical framework used in this study. The theoretical framework adopted for this study,

symbolic interactionism, required the use of methods that would allow for the direct examination of the empirical social world (Blumer, 1986). These methods are qualitative ones.

The primary site of the study was the department over which the mid-level manager was in charge. This organizational site was selected to intentionally bound the research for manageability.

Research Design and Data Collection

This study used indepth interviews, observations, and document review to examine the organizational world of two collegiate mid-level managers in student affairs at a major eastern research university. The context was framed by the formal position of the mid-level manager. Thus, the study examined what it meant to be the person in a particular mid-level position at this institution from that person's point of view. Through the use of interviews, observations, and document review the notion of role, as a set of potential behaviors, was explored from the mid-level manager's perspective. Specific data collection techniques included:

Indepth interviews. Three extended, indepth interviews were conducted with each mid-level manager for periods of approximately 1 1/2-2 hours each. Each interview had a particular focus and a general protocol to guide discussion. The first interview was intended to gather general information about the mid-level manager. Questions included those related to

educational background, how one made career decisions, and general expectations about what it meant to them to be a person holding a particular role in this institution. The second interview was concerned with management style and the relationship of the mid-level manager to subordinate staff. Questions were posed to glean from the mid-level manager a sense of expectations of self and others in decision situations as well as metaphorical descriptions of self.

The third interview was intended to probe questions that remained unanswered, such as the economic stress the campus was experiencing, the notion of tension between student and academic affairs, and to bring the research to closure.

Observations. A minimum of three extended observations were made of each mid-level manager. Staff meetings were attended and day-long observations were also included as a part of the observation process.

Document review. In addition to interviews and observations, correspondence and departmental documents were reviewed to corroborate data collected from other sources.

In order to grasp the cultural environment and role-culture congruity, interviews were conducted with subordinate staff members who reported directly to the mid-level manager. These interviews had the specific purpose of exploring expectations of behavior that subordinate staff had of the mid-level manager. This accounted for the perceptions of role that subordinate staff held for the mid-level manager.

Data Analysis and Findings

Data analysis consisted of identifying themes to generate descriptive portraits of the individual cases and placed these portraits within a cultural context. The data analysis is organized under the following headings: 1) LGU: The Institutional Context, 2) Student Affairs at LGU, 3) R.L. and O.S.: Responses to Institutional Climate, 4) R.L.: Community-Builder and Entrepreneur, 5) O.S.: Protector and, 6) Factors Influencing Role-Culture Congruence. Finally, a section entitled, Implications for Higher Education Research is included to explore the value of this type of interpretive research to the field.

LGU: The Institutional Context

The context for this study was a major research institution on the east coast, known as LG University (LGU). As a landgrant institution, LGU holds itself up as the flagship campus of a multi-campus system and, according to institutional documents, aspires to be a state, regional, and national leader among state universities. Over the years, while the mission of LGU has remained intact, the specific objectives and initiatives of the campus have taken on new dimensions as the institution responded to emerging educational needs and fiscal constraints. Thus, the campus has designed new initiatives related to such issues as campus diversity and affirmative action, reassessing the undergraduate curriculum, and providing additional attention and

resources to graduate education. While the importance of these initiatives is acknowledged, actual implementation has been slower than anticipated in light of a change in the fiscal climate that occurred approximately five years ago.

Fiscally, LGU is not unlike others in geographic areas experiencing economic stress. The base budget for the institution has been reduced over the past five years by approximately 20 percent and it would appear as if additional reductions are in the offing. This stress has placed increased pressure on the organization to downsize and limit new program initiatives that require the outlay of funds. While the downsizing effort has been attempted through attrition, the nature of the budget cuts have forced the campus to examine programs and revisit and redefine even that most sacred of concepts, that is, tenure. The budget stress has had a negative impact on the morale of faculty, staff, and students. Faculty and staff are concerned about job security, and students are concerned about the level of programs and services. All seem to be concerned with the overall impact on an institution that had overcome a negative reputation and was rapidly creating the regional and national image posited as desired in institutional documents.

Thus, the institutional climate is shaky. The campus is in the throes of transition as it grapples with difficult economic times. This transition includes evaluation of programs and services which, quite expectedly, has had an impact on campus

morale and overall feeling of security.

Student Affairs at LGU

Student Affairs at LGU is not unlike one would find at other state universities. The Vice-President for Student Affairs is one of five Vice-Presidents reporting to the President, the others being: Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Vice-President for Administration, Vice-President for Graduate Studies, and Vice-President for Development and External Relations. The six major departments under the Student Affairs Vice-President at LGU include the health center, police and safety, student activities, residence life, dean of students, and educational outreach and academic support. Each department is headed by a dean or director and each has a number of activities and support staff reporting to each department head.

One senses that this student affairs division is fairly typical of other student affairs divisions. During this past however, the Division experienced a turnover in leadership. The Vice-President for Student Affairs, after a long tenure, left LGU for another position. An interim vice-president was appointed from the ranks of the division and, in part due to fiscal constraints and, in part due to time constraints, an internal search was conducted. The result was that the interim Vice-President was appointed to the position for a two-year period.

R.L. & O.S.: Responses to Institutional Climate

The two mid-level managers in this study viewed the economic stress LGU is experiencing in very different ways. R.L., the head of residence life, while understanding of the impact on the campus as a whole, viewed the economy as an opportunity to make change within his department.

Well, the economic thing is a tremendous morale problem....The biggest factor is just that there does not seem to be concern about where this institution is going. And what kind of an institution will it be....and associated with that has been the number of faculty members who have jumped ship....and what happens...is the sense of enthusiasm diminishes, the sense of not being part of a team, the loneliness increases, because you see yourself...floating apart, and saying where am I going to find another job. ...you have a tendency to be less professional. Because you are not eating and sleeping and drinking the job. You are thinking about somewhere else.

What happens is that we see this as totally and singularly impacting on LGU. Like we are an island. And our island is ready to sink....But the reality is that [other universities] are experiencing similar problems. Again, you look at the possibilities,...what about a change of programs... I use the economic situation in order to make changes that I could not make otherwise...that gives me personal satisfaction, because I was able to get something done that I could not do before.

While R.L. viewed the economic situation as an opportunity, O.S. viewed the situation as personally and professionally demoralizing:

...the budget situation has just been devastating for us, just devastating...it has meant that so many of the initiatives that we would like to undertake have not been undertakable. It has meant that mostly to people you say no, I can't do that, no, I am not interested in that, no, that can't work out. So I think the morale is very low, people feel resentful. Just a little bit ago my personnel person was saying to me that if I invite the directors to a retreat that I have to be somewhat sensitive to how they are feeling, which is they are being asked all the time to do more and more with less and less. So even things which are

quite ordinary in aspects of administrative life are tinged with the fact that people do not really want to sit around and talk about what the goals are and where the organization is trying to move and they can't go to professional conferences, and they can't initiate any programs and they have to work with substantial numbers of vacancies in their area.

These perceptions of institutional context indicate, in symbolic interactionist terms, objects of meaning. To R.L. the economic stress the campus is experiencing is unpleasant, yet while he acknowledges the demoralizing effect on people, he focuses more attention upon his personal challenge to find opportunity in distress. O.S., on the other hand, chooses to focus more upon the demoralizing impact of the budget situation and the constraints it places upon her and her subordinates to continue to move forward. These reflect, in part, the objects of importance to R.L. and O.S. and guide their individual behavior in their departments.

R.L.: Community-Builder and Entrepreneur

R.L. has been in residence life at LGU for over ten years and has always been in the residence life field. Initially, R.L. had aspirations of becoming a clinical psychologist but, early in R.L.'s college career, R.L. discovered and embraced a love of residential life. As an R.A., he learned many different things.

..I decided to do some interesting things as an R.A...and that was to use my position to invite people from the placement center to come in. And I really felt that the whole experience, in terms of how they viewed education, how they viewed career development, was really kind of an interesting thing and I began sharing that information with students in the halls I was working in. And I just really got excited about my job as an R.A. and sharing and helping

people to grow and develop and to do some things that they thought normally they couldn't do.

R.L. enjoyed working with students and found success as evidenced by continual pats on the back and promotions. R.L. continued to work in residence halls throughout graduate work and completed a doctoral dissertation on residence life. According to R.L., the reason behind the success was that no one had "found out the mistakes he had made." R.L.'s continuing interest in clinical psychology seems to be played out through residential life educational programming and he is quick to note that as much education occurs in the residence halls as in the classroom, in fact, maybe more. R.L. describes himself as wanting to be a part of a community. He likes to be involved with activities, with family, and with the work community. Much of this, he admits, has been shaped by his family experience and translates into a belief that "what's really important is leaving this world a little bit better than you found it when you came into it." His views are admittedly shaped by his family experience.

...there was a lot of time that we spent at home talking about values, talking about relationships and from real traditional Catholic perspectives... my parents...weren't schooled people, but as parents with lots of love, lots of caring, big extended family and, that had a very important impact on me and that sense of community. For example, today, I recognize the value of community and so as I moved around the country, I would select where I was going to live based on where and how I can develop a sense of community. As opposed to what neighborhood is the best, what school's the best neighborhood....

In terms of management style, R.L. describes his management style as one that does not subscribe to the bureaucratic hierarchy. He

views the organization as a whole and addresses problems with personnel at any level, yet is careful to inform the appropriate supervisor of his actions and intentions. R.L. carefully bounds those institutional activities in which he will participate. He is concerned about the access to courses that students have, which he views as limited, but is reluctant to be an advocate for change for, as he puts it, "It's not my area."

While R.L. describes himself as an individual with a purpose and an opportunity-seizer, a singular descriptive term would be that of entrepreneur. His purpose is to build a strong residential life program. From this entrepreneurial perspective, he sees opportunity even in the face adversity. The first example of this is the economic stress of the institution. For R.L., this is an opportunity to make program changes. The same holds true from the tension that is acknowledged between Academic and Student Affairs and the current disarray that R.L. perceives the Division as being in. About the tension he says,

I agree with this tension, but I also feel that there is an opportunity....if there is that void, then let me fill it. If the undergraduates are not understanding the tasks necessary for them to get the most out of the institution then let me help them. One of the things I have been frustrated by to some degree, is some of my colleagues in Student Affairs who every time there is a problem say, "Where is the faculty, how come the faculty are not supporting us?"...If there is a problem, I'll own it. I'm gonna solve it, I am gonna throw the variables around. That is seizing opportunities and many university people don't seize opportunities. They are afraid of them.

These two themes of community-builder and entrepreneur appear to have support from R.L.'s staff. In general, they view the

atmosphere in residence life as, "very lively, very pragmatic, very caring, very exciting." They expect R.L. to participate in campus politics and to be active in divisional meetings and mostly to keep them informed. Consistent with the image of community-builder, is the fact that subordinates expect R.L. to provide them with autonomy in their jobs, to trust them, and to affirm, not make their decisions. They seem to understand and support the entrepreneurial side of R.L. who has, what they refer to as "pet projects." Typical of the description of the expectations of R.L. are reflected in a description of the culture of residence life.

It's a kind of corporate structure with a lot of elements that would not be accepted within the corporate world. It's unique in the sense that it's a hybrid between corporate and I don't know what the opposite is...I was going to say laissez fair, but it's really not laissez fair, it's participatory to some degree...in the sense that R.L. sets the agendas for those meetings and really, you know, has a personal project he's always working on at any level. It may be kind of the global long-range planning, getting resources for the department, external liaison that the typical CEO would be doing. But they are also playing with the cable system or playing with voice mail, he just has the need to do that as well. For the most part, each of his division heads are independent...R.L. kind of bumps in and out depending on what's on his mind. He typically has a big thing a year he likes to work on and occupies a lot of his time. It was cable last year. The cable is in and running, what's next? He's going to find something...culture in this organization is really entrepreneurial, real bold--big changes....

O.S.: Protector

Unlike R.L., O.S. had not originally planned an administrative career in student affairs. Her path was an academic one and she moved through undergraduate and graduate

school with the intention of being a faculty member. After graduate school she became a junior faculty member at a prestigious university. While there she juggled the demands of several sections of high-enrollment classes with the expectations of scholarship. Since the university was also experiencing a period of economic stress, O.S. was constantly concerned about her employment security.

Her first administrative position was not planned. She was asked to work in one of the student affairs offices and she agreed. She found that she enjoyed her work, was able to continue to teach as an adjunct faculty member and received many rewards for her work, including promotions from director to associate dean. As O.S. began looking for other opportunities at other universities, she determined that her first love was of public institutions. O.S. attributed this to her father, who was in public service.

I've always had a public sector orientation. And that probably has to do with my father, who for many years, was on the regional planning staff for the Tennessee Valley Authority. He had a distinguished public service career. He gave me some sense that you give back. I never really considered going into business, stock broker, etc....

O.S. desires to continue a career path in administration and sees her position at LGU as an intermediate step to a senior management position. This intermediate step, while initially viewed as an opportunity to develop new skills and to be in charge, has not been a particularly happy one.

I would not describe this as the happiest time of my life,

but it certainly has been a personally strengthening experience and it has been very interesting. There are two things which have overshadowed it all; the one of course is the budget crisis, except this time instead of being the person who is trembling in the corner, I'm the person who is in the position to make decisions and it has meant really that. You know, when you go through the search committee, you tell them all the wonderful new initiatives that you can bring to the University; and I said all those things in good faith; but it has certainly not been that way. It has been a constant process of trying to protect the key functions in the department, and there's just a lot of saying "no."
...That's been very painful.

The identification with the protector role is one that O.S. agrees with, but she extends the description to have maternal overtones. Regarding the description of her as a protector, she commented:

Yes, I think of that, I was sort of thinking of something in which you spread your skirts over it and try to take care of it. And I think that is true, it is a job of trying to see to the well-being of the division. There is a meaning of well-being of it fiscally, but it also means the well-being of protecting the personnel that we have and protecting the programs they are operating. And I think probably in better times that is not the role at all. And I am forever saying, no don't take that program away, no, don't cut the budget in that way, no, don't freeze that position, no don't....you know. I spend a lot of time trying to keep it all together and I suspect that in much better budget times that is not what you do at all, what you do is grow, innovate and you build new programs and all of these kinds of things.

While those who report to O.S. may implicitly feel a desire to have O.S. serve as their protector, more often, their voiced expectations included that of advocate, and risk-taker and the extent to which these expectations were met seemed to be mixed. Being seen as an advocate was identified by some as important to O.S. This was identified as separate from the budget crisis and as being supportive.

Communication, I think, is primary...supporting her staff in as many ways as she can, in terms of being an advocate for her staff and her unit. I think that's important to her.

Another department head said something similar:

I suppose I expect regular communication activities....I expect...that she'll be supportive of, the current challenge, or difficulty of (my job) at LGU at this time...I expect her to appreciate the nature of the, of the crisis, you know, that we're in, that we've got, and then to provide whatever support she can up the line to...assist me to get the job done.

Several expected O.S. to be more of a risk-taker, particularly with respect to personnel decisions. Some expressed that O.S. might be overly protective of people. There were a few instances in which it was felt that a personnel decision was made to placate the person involved and to "make them happy." While at once demonstrating behavior consistent with O.S.'s role of protector, the desired behavior from other actors' points of view, was more that of risk-taker and hard decision-maker than of protector.

Factors Influencing Role-Culture Congruity

Consistent with symbolic interactionism and indicated by the data gathered in this study is the notion that individuals bring to roles expectations as to what that role means and the rules of conduct that are to be played out. Symbolic interactionism would also hold that individuals enter environments, in this study referred to as cultures, comprised of other individuals who hold their own set of expectations regarding the role of the individual entering the culture. In interaction, these

expectations confront each other and, in order to achieve stability within the culture, a negotiation process (role-making and role-taking) takes place where a balance is attempted regarding behavioral expectations. If accomplished, a role-culture congruity has been achieved. This research suggests that three factors may influence the extent to which this role-culture congruity may be achieved. These are: 1) time, 2) space and, 3) ghosts.

The dimension of time refers, in this instance, to the amount of time the mid-level manager has been in the position. R.L. has been head of residence life for over ten years. During that time, he has been able to hire people who are more in sync with his own style of leadership and management. With his longevity, R.L. has been able to reshape the culture as one in which the shared meanings are consistent with R.L.'s views. O.S., on the other hand, has been in her position for less than 3 years, hardly enough time for major staff turnover to occur. The economic climate, and the hiring freeze, will make it even more difficult for O.S. to replace staff with those who may initially be more in sync with her views. In addition, due in part to issues of space and ghosts, O.S. has been less able in this short time to reshape the culture as one in which her vision is mutually shared.

The dimension of space is one of geographic proximity. In R.L.'s case, all but one of the staff members who report directly to him are in the same building as he is. The space is one and

one-half floors of a converted barracks, the atmosphere being somewhat campy and homey. In O.S.'s situation, staff are more dispersed and there exists a division of "central staff" and "department heads." "Central staff" consists of those in O.S.'s immediate office suite, which is more modern and more formal than R.L.'s. "Central Staff" is located in the main administration building on campus which also houses the senior administration of LGU. "Department heads" are dispersed in various office spaces throughout this large campus. Consequently, O.S.'s attempts to negotiate her role with those who report to her is made all the more difficult because of the infrequency of contact she has with over one-half of her staff. Her distance makes interaction more deliberate and planned. R.L., on the other hand, is able to "bump in and out," as his staff has indicated, because he is closer in proximity to them. He is able to initiate interaction and has more opportunities to engage in the role negotiation process.

Ghosts refer to those people who have influenced the behavioral expectations of other actors in the culture. For the mid-level manager, the primary ghost is often the mid-level manager's predecessor. Again, the ghost for R.L. is very different from the ghost for O.S. R.L. was brought in to make difficult decisions.

When I first came here, this place was an awful mess and I had to be really dictatorial...I was brought in to make change. And it was so, so, bad, and I realized I had to move so quickly if I was going to be successful.

During the course of this time, R.L. was given the flexibility to

make change, as long as he accepted the responsibility for the decisions. He made the goals of the organization clear and a number of people left because they didn't believe in those goals. His supervisor ultimately left and, by that time, R.L. had begun to negotiate his role with other cultural actors and build an organization in his own image. The ghost for R.L. was an exorcised ghost. Through the process of change, a process R.L. initiated and shaped, his predecessor became less and less a significant actor in the culture. By the time his predecessor left, R.L. was well on the way to shaping the organization in his own image.

O.S., however, did not have the luxury of being brought in to "save a sinking ship." She replaced a person who had held her position for a number of years and was viewed as quite capable and, in the words of some, "a superstar." Thus, in her attempts to negotiate her role, she is constantly confronted with others' expectations that she will be like her predecessor. This is made all the more difficult for O.S. because, from her perspective and a few department heads, the organization that O.S. manages is a different organization than the one her predecessor managed. However, what becomes clear are the staff's expectations that O.S. will perform in the same vein as the manager before her; a manager who had been in the organization for many years and, although the organization is now different, had shaped the infrastructure of the department. Her predecessor was the organizational saga for the department.

Implications for Higher Education Research

The present study adds support for the use of interpretive frameworks to explore the empirical social world of higher education and, in particular, the collegiate mid-level manager. The use of symbolic interactionism guided this research toward a direct examination of the collegiate mid-level manager's world. This direct examination from the actor's point of view presented a more complete and complex picture than other perspectives might present. This perspective allows us to present the social world as a complex reality.

From this interpretive perspective, the complexity of role and culture becomes evident. Both become something different than extant concepts. Role, as a pattern of expected behaviors, takes on new meaning when one considers the actor's expectations of role as well as those with whom the actor will interact. Culture takes on new dimensions as well and individual actors become more than players in a pre-existing structure labeled culture. They become the shapers and sustainers of an environment that is obdurate, yet tenuous as actors interact.

The present study also contributes to our understanding of collegiate mid-level managers. The symbolic interactionist perspective sheds a glimmer of light on the involvement of mid-level managers in the shaping of organizational culture. While this study was merely exploratory with its focus on two case studies, the intent was to present the the theoretical perspective as a valuable one from which to examine the world of

collegiate mid-level managers and to encourage further research on this understudied and critical population to higher education.

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